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SUBJECT: CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S QUIET REVOLUTION AND ITS
PROSPECTS

¶11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

¶12. SUMMARY. CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S "QUIET" REVOLUTION, WITH THE CIVIC FORUM IN ITS VANGUARD, HAS REALLY ONLY JUST BEGUN, BUT IT HAS REACHED AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE IN FORCING THE REGIME TO ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE. THE FORUM'S REPRESENTATIVES DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE LONG FIGHT AHEAD BEFORE THE LEGAL AND TACTICAL ROADBLOCKS THE CPCZ WILL PUT IN THE WAY OF ACHIEVING SUCH GOALS AS FREE ELECTIONS CAN BE OVERCOME AND THE PRESENT TOTALITARIAN SYSTEM CAN BE GRADUALLY TRANSFORMED INTO A PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY. END SUMMARY.

A NON-VIOLENT REVOLUTION

¶13. WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA OVER THE PAST 12 DAYS IS NOTHING SHORT OF A POPULAR REVOLUTION, BUT A NON-VIOLENT ONE. IT IS A REVOLUTION SPARKED BY STUDENTS AND ARTISTS IN REACTION TO THE BRUTAL SUPPRESSION ON NOVEMBER 17 OF A STUDENT DEMONSTRATION AND THEN JOINED BY WORKERS AND THE GREAT MASS OF THE PEOPLE. LIKE THE PRAGUE SPRING OF 1968, THIS REVOLUTION HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE GRADUAL LOSS OF FEAR BY THE MAN IN THE STREET OF REGIME REPRESSION, BUT DIFFERS FROM 1968 IN THAT IT ORIGINATED FROM WITHIN THE YOUNGER GENERATION AND NOT SO MUCH FROM REFORM ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CPCZ. IT THUS IS MORE OF A REJECTION OF THE 41 YEARS OF THE COUNTRY'S COMMUNIST PAST.

THE FORUM: A LOOSE COALITION

¶14. BUT IF THIS REVOLUTION BEGAN SPONTANEOUSLY, ITS POPULAR FOCAL POINT QUICKLY BECAME THE "CIVIC FORUM," SYMBOLIZED BY PLAYWRIGHT VACLAV HAVEL. THE FORUM HAS ARTICULATED POPULAR DEMANDS BUT DECLINED BECOMING A POLITICAL PARTY. ITS GREATEST SUCCESS, SO FAR, HAS BEEN IN MOBILIZING MASS DEMONSTRATIONS AND SUPPORT FOR A GENERAL STRIKE. THESE TOPPLED THE OLD COMMUNIST PARTY LEADERSHIP AND FORCED THE GOVERNMENT (AND THE PARTY STANDING BEHIND IT) RELUCTANTLY INTO A DIALOGUE.

¶15. THE FORUM'S REPRESENTATIVES ARE CAREFUL NOT TO EXAGGERATE THE CONCESSIONS, SPECIFICALLY AN END TO THE LEGAL BASIS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S "LEADING ROLE," THAT THIS DIALOGUE HAS PRODUCED UP TO NOW. THE FORUM'S OBJECTIVES ARE MUCH BROADER. IT WANTS NOTHING LESS THAN TO PREPARE THE GROUNDWORK FOR FREE ELECTIONS AND CONVERSION OF THE PRESENT TOTALITARIAN SYSTEM TO DEMOCRACY. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE REGIME TO ACHIEVE THIS HAVE ONLY BEGUN; THAT THEY WILL BE COMPLEX. EVEN AFTER THE GOVERNMENT PRODUCES A NEW COALITION OF "EXPERTS" ON DECEMBER 3 AS PRIME MINISTER ADAMEC HAS PROMISED, THE

FORUM EXPECTS DELAYING TACTICS, PROVOCATIONS AND ATTEMPTS TO PLAY ON ITS INTERNAL DIVISIONS.

¶16. THOSE DIVISIONS ARE VERY REAL. REPRESENTED WITHIN THE FORUM ARE POLITICAL GROUPINGS THAT RANGE FROM REFORM COMMUNIST (THE RENEWAL GROUP) TO LIBERAL (THE DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVE). SLOVAKS ARE REPRESENTED BY THEIR OWN SEPARATE PRO-DEMOCRACY ORGANIZATION, THE PUBLIC AGAINST VIOLENCE. STUDENT GROUPS WHICH BEGAN THE STRIKE FOR CHANGE SEEM IRRITATED THAT THE FORUM HAS TAKEN OVER THE PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT FROM THEM. WORKERS, AFTER FLEXING THEIR MUSCLES IN THE NOVEMBER 27 GENERAL STRIKE, SEEM READIER TO SUPPORT MORE INDUSTRIAL ACTION THAN THE INTELLECTUALS AND PROFESSIONALS HEADING THE FORUM.

¶17. THE FORUM IS TRYING TO PLAY THESE DIVISIONS DOWN BY EMPHASIZING ITS TRANSITIONAL, NON-POLITICAL CHARACTER AND BY KEEPING ITS SUPPORTERS' ATTENTION ON ITS LONGER TERM GOALS FOR SOCIETY: A MIXED ECONOMY, A PLURALISTIC POLITICAL SYSTEM AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S INTEGRATION INTO WESTERN EUROPE. INTERESTINGLY, THE FORUM'S SEVEN CHAPTER PROGRAM STATEMENT (PRAGUE 8312) NOT ONCE MENTIONS THE WORD "SOCIALISM."

THE COMMUNIST PARTY, DOWN BUT NOT OUT

¶18. IN LESS THAN TWO WEEKS OF THIS REVOLUTION, THE CPCZ' AUTHORITY AND CONTROL OF SOCIETY HAS BEEN ENORMOUSLY ERODED. INTERNAL SPLITS HAVE DEVELOPED. A REFORM-MINDED PARTY GROUP HAS SET UP THE "DEMOCRATIC FORUM," CALLING FOR A RE-EVALUATION OF 1968 AND RE-ADMISSION OF PURGED PRAGUE SPRING FIGURES. THE ELIMINATION OF PARTY CONTROL OVER THE MEDIA HAS BEEN DRAMATIC, AS TELEVISION AND RADIO NEWS-CASTERS OVERNIGHT BEGAN TO FUNCTION LIKE THEIR WESTERN COUNTERPARTS. THE PARTY HAS FORESWORN USE OF FORCE IN A CENTRAL COMMITTEE RESOLUTION, THOUGH QUALIFYING THIS COMMITMENT BY REFERRING TO A NEED TO DEFEND LIFE, PROPERTY AND "THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SOCIALISM."

¶19. ALTHOUGH REELING, THE PARTY IS NOT A SPENT FORCE, HOWEVER, AND IT WILL NOT WILLINGLY COMMIT POLITICAL SUICIDE BY MOVING TO FREE ELECTIONS. IN A SPEECH ON NOVEMBER 28, THE NEW GENERAL SECRETARY KAREL URBANEK HAS CALLED ON HIS CADRES TO GO ON THE OFFENSIVE AND SEEK TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THE NOW LARGELY REFORM-MINDED MEDIA. HE HAS REJECTED RECENT CALLS BY THE FORUM TO ABOLISH THE PEOPLE'S MILITIA, REMOVE PARTY FIGURES AS FACTORY MANAGERS AND ELIMINATE BASIC PARTY ORGANIZATIONS IN ENTERPRISES. URBANEK PLANS TO TRAVEL TO MOSCOW IN EARLY DECEMBER AND WILL CERTAINLY BE SEEKING SOME SIGN OF GORBACHEV'S SUPPORT FOR HIS PARTY AND ITS FUTURE.

¶10. DESPITE ITS DISARRAY, THE CPCZ STILL HOLDS SOME STRONG CARDS. THE PARTY STILL DOMINATES IMPORTANT SOCIETAL INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING THE SECURITY FORCES, AND STILL IS THE PREDOMINANT FORCE IN THE NATIONAL FRONT, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE SO EVEN AFTER ITS LEGAL BASIS FOR THAT CONTROL IS ELIMINATED. IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT THE REGIME HAS CHOSEN THE FRONT AS THE FRAMEWORK FOR DIALOGUE WITH THE CIVIC FORUM, THEREBY TRYING TO PRESENT THE FORUM AS THE "OPPOSITION" TO ESTABLISHED, PARTY-CONTROLLED INSTITUTIONS.

WHERE THE REVOLUTION IS HEADED

¶11. VALTR KOMAREK, AN ECONOMIST TOUTED BY SOME AS POSSIBLE MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE IN A NEW COALITION

GOVERNMENT, WAS ASKED THIS WEEK HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO CONVERT INTO A WESTERN-STYLE DEMOCRACY. HE RESPONDED THAT THE COUNTRY DID NOT NEED TO RECEIVE DEMOCRACY IN DRIBS AND DRABS; THE PEOPLE COULD SWALLOW IT WHOLE. IF THE COMMUNISTS CAN BE FORCED TO LET THE COUNTRY'S LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS CONFORM TO THE PEOPLE'S WILL, HE SAID, CZECHOSLOVAKIA COULD RESUME ITS REFORMIST, DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS ALMOST OVERNIGHT. THAT IS AN ASSESSMENT THE EMBASSY SHARES.

¶12. THE BRAKE ON THIS TRANSITION WILL BE THE ONE APPLIED BY THE PRESENT REGIME'S LEADERSHIP AS IT MANEUVERS TO DELAY THE DATE OF REFORMS, PARTICULARLY FREE ELECTIONS. THE REGIME HAS A NUMBER OF ROADBLOCKS, POLITICAL AND LEGAL, IT CAN PUT IN THE WAY. AS GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY, JAN SKODA, HAS POINTED OUT TO US, MOVING UP THE DATE OF ELECTIONS WILL REQUIRE A TWO-THIRDS VOTE OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY. THIS IS SOMETHING THE ASSEMBLY, A MAJORITY OF WHOSE MEMBERS ARE COMMUNIST AND LIKELY TO BE VOTED OUT, MAY BE UNREADY TO AGREE TO. HOWEVER, THE CZECH AND SLOVAK TENDENCY TOWARDS CONSENSUS AND LOSS OF LEGITIMACY BY THE CPCZ HIERARCHY SUGGEST THAT PARLIAMENTARIANS AS WELL AS OTHER FUNCTIONARIES WILL MOVE RAPIDLY TO SHOW "REFORMIST" COLORS.

¶13. QUICK ELECTIONS ARE NOT NECESSARILY IN THE CIVIC FORUM'S INTEREST. MANY OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS IT REPRESENTS ARE ONLY IN AN EMBRYONIC STATE AND WILL NEED MORE TIME TO ORGANIZE. IN THE MEANTIME, AS THE FORUM'S LIST OF DEMANDS SUBMITTED TO ADAMEC ON NOVEMBER 28 (SEPTEL) INDICATES, IT WILL FOCUS ON THE PERSONNEL AND LEGAL CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM NECESSARY TO ASSURE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TOWARDS DEMOCRACY.

RUSSELL